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CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SECOND PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 26 March 1996, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Abuah (Nigeria)

GE.96-60941 (E)

The PRESIDENT: I declare open the 732nd plenary meeting of the Conference of Disarmament.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome, on behalf of the Conference, and on my own behalf, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Her Excellency Tarja Halonen, who will be our first speaker today. Her presence among us today is, yet again, a clear indication of the important attached by her Government to our forum and the successful conclusion of the negotiations on a comprehensive test-ban treaty. I also have on my list of speakers the representatives of Norway, France, Australia, Belgium and New Zealand.

As I announced at our last plenary meeting, once we have listened to the speakers inscribed for today, I intend to put to the Conference for decision the recommendation contained in paragraph 24 of the progress report on the forty-third session of the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts to Consider International Cooperative Measures to Detect and Identify Seismic Events (CD/1385), concerning proposed dates for its next session.

I should now like to give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Her Excellency Tarja Halonen.

Mrs. HALONEN (Finland): I am grateful for this opportunity to address the Conference on Disarmament at this very moment. A comprehensive test-ban treaty (CTBT) is finally within reach. This treaty will respond to the call that so many of us have made for so long. It will be an historic step. That is the outcome Finland wants from these negotiations. The CTBT is the means to achieve a permanent end to nuclear-test explosions. The test ban should and, I believe, will become a global norm. The objective is to have a universal treaty. The CTBT will prevent the development of new generations of nuclear weapons. It will prevent the emergence of entirely new nuclear arsenals. It will constrain all. It will make the world a safer place, and it will be beneficial for the environment.

In view of the imminence of a test-ban treaty, the continuation of nuclear testing has been particularly sad. It is no wonder that reactions to recent Chinese and French testing have been strong the world over. Finland welcomes the announcement by President Chirac on 29 January of a definitive end to French nuclear testing, and the active French commitment to achieving a CTBT. We urge China to join the other nuclear-weapon States and stop any further testing. This is not an issue on which anyone can go one's own way without regard to consequences for the negotiations.

Finland strongly supports the goal of having the treaty concluded by the end of June. The momentum is there. Now that the end of the negotiations is well within sight, a distinction should be drawn between what belongs to the treaty and what belongs to the work of the Preparatory Commission following signature of the treaty. This is not the time for micromanagement. Australia and Iran have assisted the process through their comprehensive contributions. We welcome them. We also welcome the leadership of Ambassador Ramaker in pushing the negotiations forward.

Let me indicate our choices on some of the key issues yet to be resolved. Finland welcomes the continuing movement towards consensus on what, after all, a test ban is all about. The scope of the treaty should mean zero explosions, zero yields, and a zero distinction between peaceful and non-peaceful explosions. The test ban will be an achievement that stands on its own, serving the twin goals of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. It would be a disservice to make the ban conditional on other objectives. Calls for extending the scope to cover not only explosions but also other activities risk agreement on the treaty itself.

Finland wants the treaty to enter into force as soon as possible upon signature. A set number of ratifications, as in the case of the Chemical Weapons Convention, should be the sole trigger.

The international community, and world public opinion, will be assuming that nuclear-test explosions are a thing of the past when the treaty is signed. Signature constitutes commitment. But commitment could be made explicit. Finland therefore urges that upon signature the nuclear-weapon States affirm, jointly or individually, that pending ratification they will not test and that they will swiftly ratify the treaty.

I welcome the prospect that the CTBT organization will be located in Vienna. There should be a close relationship with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Necessary arrangements for this can be agreed upon in the Preparatory Commission and in the course of actual implementation of the treaty.

The provisions for the managing body, the Executive Council, should be so designed as to ensure a fair balance of representation between geographical groups and within groups. Every State party should have an opportunity to serve on the Executive Council.

The work of the Preparatory Commission in Vienna should be launched as of the signature of the treaty. Finland is ready to make an advance payment to this end.

Let me now turn to the issue of verification. The establishment of an international monitoring system (IMS) will be a demanding task. Finland supports the four networks - seismic, radionuclide, hydroacoustic and infrasound - incorporated in the rolling text. In view of its crucial role in helping to detect underground explosions, noble gas monitoring should be included in the IMS.

My Government is making available a station (FINES) in central Finland for the primary seismic network and a laboratory in Helsinki for radionuclide monitoring. We will also cooperate through other national facilities.

The IMS will provide technical means to ensure compliance with treaty obligations. But it will also increase knowledge of the respective technologies and of global conditions regarding, among other things, radiation and seismic events. Therefore, it also serves health and the environment. All States parties will benefit from this cooperation.

Finland expects readable, refined information from the IMS, as well as access to any raw data collected. Finland is ready to contribute to the development of data processing in the international data centre.

Global monitoring will reveal events which could raise compliance concerns. I am sure that the vast majority of them can, and will, be settled through consultation and clarification. But the credibility of the treaty requires that it include procedures - available to all States parties - for dealing with situations when compliance is in doubt. That means effective on-site inspections.

Procedures should be so designed that it is possible to catch time-critical evidence. Anything less will undermine confidence. The first phase of the inspection should be carried out unless the Executive Council decides not to authorize it.

The CTBT will be a step toward the ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons, a goal reaffirmed at the NPT Review and Extension Conference last May. The NPT Conference was a victory for peace and security. A permanent NPT does not sanction the permanent possession of nuclear weapons by anyone. On the contrary, principles and objectives were laid down which will provide the global context for further efforts toward nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. In this connection, Finland welcomes the signature yesterday by France, the United Kingdom and the United States of the additional protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty.

In the end, it is the results that count. In terms of actual nuclear reductions, bilaterally negotiated agreements and unilateral action have so far produced the results. Implementation of START I is well under way. Finland welcomes the recent ratification of START II by the United States Senate. We hope that the Russian Duma will soon do likewise. That step would clear the way for consideration of START III. At the same time, it is fair to ask what the Conference on Disarmament can contribute to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. This Conference is a negotiating forum. That point cannot be overemphasized. If, in earlier years, dialogue was often an end in itself, that is no longer so. Today, concrete results are expected. The Conference is on its way to achieving the test ban. Next, it should negotiate to cut off production of fissile material for nuclear weapons.

Looking beyond that, the entire agenda of the Conference should be readjusted to reflect post-cold-war needs. As its name already says, the Conference on Disarmament needs an agenda that spans the entire field of disarmament, nuclear and conventional. Indeed, it is in the field of

conventional disarmament that urgent international action is called for. It is conventional weapons - especially small arms and light weapons - that are used in gross violations of human rights in internal and regional conflicts. Conventional proliferation - to coin a term - threatens not only security and stability but the very basics of humanity in various parts of the world. In my opinion, the Conference on Disarmament cannot remain indifferent to this scourge.

Everyone acknowledges that the composition of the Conference does not reflect present realities. Last September, the Conference took the decision to expand its membership. This decision needs to be implemented. Finland has contributed to the work of the Conference for more than two decades as an observer. We are now doing so as one of the 23. We would like to contribute as a member without any further delay. For Finland, disarmament is a means to strengthen international peace and security. The Conference on Disarmament is the means to negotiate and make global disarmament a reality.

I wish you every success in your work.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Norway, Ambassador Skogmo.

Mr. SKOGMO (Norway): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. Nigeria and Norway have been alphabetical neighbours in the United Nations for many years. I hope we soon can enjoy the same pleasure in the CD. Meanwhile, my delegation looks forward to cooperating with you in the exercise of your functions. I can assure you of Norway's full support in your important endeavours.

For many years Norway has advocated the conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty. We have supported political efforts to build consensus before negotiations could start. We have taken an active part in scientific preparations for building a reliable, credible and feasible verification system. In the view of the Norwegian Government, nuclear tests are a heavy strain on all international non-proliferation and disarmament efforts. Nuclear tests present a risk to the environment and to human health.

As an important step on the road to nuclear disarmament and arms control, we too welcome yesterday's signing by France, the United Kingdom and the United States of the additional Protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty.

The reactions to the nuclear tests carried out by China and France, despite the moratorium exercised by the other nuclear-weapon States, clearly demonstrated that there is a strong world opinion against any nuclear testing. There are strong public expectations - also in my own country - that a comprehensive test-ban treaty should be concluded and universally implemented

as soon as possible. For the first time since mankind entered the nuclear age, a CTBT is within reach. It will not be understood by the world community if the commitment to reach at CTBT, expressed, inter alia, by the General Assembly, is blocked by a refusal to subordinate narrow perceptions of national interests to a broader and more global perspective.

A comprehensive test-ban treaty is important to restrain proliferation and development of new generations of nuclear weapons. Among the weapons of mass destruction, these are the ones that pose the most imminent threat to mankind. Our aim must be a nuclear-weapon-free world. A CTBT is a necessary prerequisite to that end. To insist on linkages to time-bound nuclear disarmament in the present negotiations is unrealistic and would derail the process. It would also be counter-productive, since it would make the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament not closer, but more distant. A failure to complete the CTBT this year would indeed be a major setback to the cause of nuclear disarmament. That is why senior officers of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, last year's Nobel Peace Prize winners, have advised strongly against any such linkage. Today, a treaty putting a complete end to all nuclear tests is the only feasible way of reducing the nuclear threat.

Norway has already stated our appreciation of the Iranian clean draft text and the Australian model treaty text. The texts are helpful tools to clarify where and how compromises are to be made. They clearly demonstrate that to conclude a CTBT is a matter of political willingness. Now the time has come to exercise the necessary political will. Let me briefly set out the views of my Government on the key issues before the Conference.

Norway would like to see universal adherence to the treaty. That is perhaps not realistic in the nearest future. We, however, believe its mere existence will have a positive and constraining impact. Hence, Norway favours a simple formula which will not permit any State to prevent the treaty from entering into force.

Norway sees no alternative to a truly comprehensive test ban. That means an absolute zero-yield standard, not allowing any nuclear-weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion. So-called peaceful nuclear explosions cannot be permitted within any credible and verifiable test-ban treaty.

Norway wants an independent CTBT organization with specific tasks and responsibilities. We welcome the candidature of Vienna to host the CTBTO and support a co-location with IAEA in the Vienna International Centre. To keep CTBTO as small and cost-effective as possible, there should be a possibility to make contractual cooperative arrangements for the use of specific expertise of other international organizations, IAEA in particular.

The composition of the Executive Council must be based on fair and equitable arrangements. All States parties should have an opportunity to be a member of the Executive Council and no State party may be permanently excluded. After having been excluded from taking part as an equal partner in the negotiating process, my delegation would certainly have great difficulty in accepting institutional arrangements which continue to be exclusive rather than inclusive. Continuous membership should be as limited as possible not to restrain fair and reasonable participation by other States parties. The paper presented by Ambassador Benjellcun-Touimi as Friend of the Chair on the composition of the Executive Council is, in our opinion, a fairly balanced compromise between different views and interests. As to the geographical distribution of seats, we should perhaps consider a mechanism which, after a given period, reviewed the number of seats allocated to each region in the light of the number of ratifications.

Norway has for many years actively participated in the Group of Seismological Experts (GSE). We have seen monitoring and verification as essential parts of a complete test-ban regime. We have done what we possibly can to prepare and to support the negotiations, putting at the disposal of the Conference national expertise developed over many years. We remain convinced that a credible treaty must be verifiable. To achieve confidence, treaty obligations must be effectively monitored. The international monitoring system (IMS) should be based on the four known technologies on which consensus has been achieved but not preclude the inclusion of additional technologies which may be available to strengthen the credibility of the IMS. On-site inspections (OSI) are natural and necessary parts of any verification regime to clarify any ambiguous events. A balance must be found between what is technically necessary to make OSI credible and what is politically acceptable. An OSI may well be a rare event, but the provisions should be sufficient to deter any violations of the treaty obligations. Abusive requests of OSI must be avoided, but it is equally important to hinder attempts to delay or even obstruct inspections.

It is decisive to establish a funding system that secures smooth and reliable operation of the CTBTO. Contributions of the States parties should be based on the United Nations scale of assessments. It should be possible to meet assessment obligations by a combination of direct payment and contribution credits. This could help to speed up the establishment and upgrading of the IMS. We agree that contribution credits must be limited to costs relevant to the establishment, upgrading and operation of IMS facilities.

In our view it is essential that the CTBTO becomes operational as soon as possible. Norway will therefore positively consider making advance contributions to this end and Norwegian facilities which will form part of the IMS will be made available from the beginning.

(Mr. Skogmo, Norway)

The negotiations on a CTBT clearly illustrate the prevailing anomaly of the unsolved question of CD membership. A United Nations-funded body dealing with issues affecting national interests of all United Nations members, on matters of global significance, must be open to all States willing and able to participate. Treaties calling for universal adherence should not be negotiated with restricted participation. An expansion of the CD, as we all know, is long overdue. Neither the CD nor any other international body receiving financial resources through the United Nations can escape the ongoing work on reforming the United Nations system. Another failure to meet the justified expectations of the candidates for full membership may well have an impact on the CD's future legitimacy and even survivability. Given the numerous statements by CD members in support of expansion in principle, to the Group of 23 and/or to other candidates, and given the unique negotiating experience represented in this chamber, my delegation find it increasingly hard to understand why a satisfactory solution to the membership issue continues to be elusive.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Norway for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of France, Mr. Rivasseau.

Mr. RIVASSEAU (France) (translated from French): Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on taking up the Chair of this Conference, and to convey to you every wish for success from the French delegation.

I would like to draw to your attention and read to the Conference a statement jointly signed by the Governments of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and my Government. Our Governments signed:

"the three Protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga) on 25 March in Suva.

"Last year's NPT Review and Extension Conference agreed that ... nuclear-weapon free zones, based on arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, enhance international peace and security. The Conference also agreed that the cooperation of all the nuclear-weapons States and their respect and support for the relevant protocols is necessary for the maximum effectiveness of such zones and the relevant protocols.

"Our decision to sign the protocols to the Treaty of Rarotonga demonstrates our clear support for a nuclear-weapons-free zone in the South Pacific.

"It is also an important further milestone in demonstrating our commitment to nuclear non-proliferation.

(Mr. Rivasseau, France)

"It underlines our wish to see a permanent end to nuclear testing throughout the world. It will give a further boost to the negotiations for a comprehensive test-ban treaty, which we believe should be completed in the first half of 1996."

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of France for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Australia, Mr. Cole.

Mr. COLE (Australia): Since this is the first occasion on which my delegation takes the floor under your presidency, Sir, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference and to assure you of the support and cooperation of the delegation of Australia. It is a special pleasure to see Nigeria, in your person, guiding our deliberations. My delegation warmly recalls the energetic commitment of Nigeria to our common disarmament and non-proliferation goals. We also recall the particularly productive bilateral cooperation our two delegations have shared over the years, including in the development of this Conference's historic agreement to commence the negotiation of the CTBT.

I would like to advise the Conference this morning that the Australian Government has warmly welcomed the signing in Fiji on 25 March of the three Protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, the Treaty of Rarotonga, by France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. All five nuclear-weapon States have now undertaken not to use, nor threaten to use, nuclear explosive devices against any member of the Zone, and not to test nuclear explosive devices within the Treaty area, and to apply the provisions of the Treaty to their non-self-governing territories within the Zone. These accessions to the Treaty Protocols formally bring to an end the unhappy chapter of nuclear testing in the South Pacific.

In his statement, the Australian Prime Minister, Mr. John Howard, said that France's signature to the Protocols is particularly welcome, as is France's response to the concerns of South Pacific States by announcing its intention to close its testing facilities, except those required for environmental monitoring, and to support the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) study into the effects of its nuclear testing.

The Australian Foreign Minister, Mr. Alexander Downer, in a statement also welcoming the signing of the Rarotonga Protocols by the three countries concerned, expressed the hope that this action would impart renewed impetus to the contemporary nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament agenda, in particular to the finalization of negotiations on a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

The fact that all five nuclear-weapon States have now undertaken to respect the provisions of the Treaty of Rarotonga brings to fruition what the countries of the South Pacific set out to achieve when they signed the Treaty in 1985. It is also, we trust, a positive signal to other countries and

peoples which aspire to, or have created nuclear-weapon-free zones in their own regions. Most recently in this regard, we welcome developments in South-East Asia and Africa.

Like others, we believe that the message from all these developments is clear. The international community ardently desires to live in a world which is secure from the threat of nuclear confrontation. It requires the cessation forthwith of all nuclear explosions; and it will not easily forgive the Conference on Disarmament should it fail to deliver a comprehensive test-ban treaty this year. It will expect this body and other relevant international and multilateral organizations to continue to pursue further meaningful nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament measures with imagination and with vigour.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Australia for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Belgium, Ambassador Guillaume.

Baron GUILLAUME (Belgium) (translated from French): First of all, Mr. President, allow me to say how pleased we are to see you in the Chair. We are aware of your reputation for excellent diplomatic qualities; there is no doubt that you will need them in the coming weeks to carry out the task falling to you. In carrying out your functions, you can rely on my delegation's full cooperation.

If I am taking the floor today, it is following the statement just made by the distinguished representative of France on behalf of his country, but also on behalf of Great Britain and the United States. Belgium, as a country which holds dear the cause of disarmament in general and more particularly that of nuclear disarmament, welcomes the fact that France, Great Britain and the United States have signed the Treaty of Rarotonga establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the South Pacific. This is an important step towards disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, and, together with all the local people, who have now seen the disappearance of this sword of Damocles, we welcome this historic event. We also consider it a very positive sign, coming from these three nuclear countries, of a resolve to make progress in the field of nuclear disarmament, and we hope to see fall-out from this decision here in Geneva, in our negotiations on the CTBT. It is essential for the negotiations to be given a fresh impetus - coming in particular from all the nuclear Powers - if we wish to see them completed by the deadline laid down, that is, by June this year.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Belgium for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of New Zealand, Ms. Duncan.

Ms. DUNCAN (New Zealand): My delegation joins in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the office of President and assures you of New Zealand's full cooperation.

(Ms. Duncan, New Zealand)

New Zealand welcomes the signature on Monday, 25 March by the United States, the United Kingdom and France of the Protocols to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty. As has been explained already this morning, the Protocols contain pledges not to manufacture, station or test nuclear explosive devices within any territories in the zone for which the signatories are responsible. In signing the Protocols, France, the United States and the United Kingdom also pledge not to use or threaten to use nuclear explosive devices against any parties to the Treaty, and not to test explosive devices anywhere within the zone. The then USSR and China signed these protocols relevant to them in 1986 and 1987 respectively.

So, all five nuclear-weapon States have now acknowledged the wish of South Pacific countries to live in a nuclear-free zone. France's signature brings an end to French nuclear testing in the South Pacific for all time. The New Zealand Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Jim Bolger, has underlined the significance of this development not only for the South pacific but also for the international community as a whole. He has pledged New Zealand's continuing efforts to conclude a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing all over the world, as well as New Zealand's support for the other nuclear-free-zone treaty arrangements in Latin America, Africa and South-East Asia. These treaties are a clear expression of the growing movement to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of New Zealand for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. That apparently concludes my list of speakers for today, unless any other delegation wishes to take the floor.

If not, I should now like to put to the Conference for decision the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Group of Scientific Experts that its next session be held from 20 to 24 May 1996. May I take it that these dates are acceptable to the Conference?

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: Before adjourning, I wish to remind you that this plenary meeting will be followed immediately by a meeting of the Friend of the Chair on on-site inspection of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Nuclear Test Ban.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament will be held on Thursday, 28 March 1996 at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.